

# The Jews

By Robert Green Ingersoll

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## Robert Green Ingersoll

WHEN I was a child, I was taught that the Jews were an exceedingly hard-hearted and cruel people, and that they were so destitute of the finer feelings that they had a little while before that time crucified the only perfect man who had appeared upon the earth; that this perfect man was also perfect God, and that the Jews had really stained their hands with the blood of the Infinite.

When I got somewhat older, I found that nearly all people had been guilty of substantially the same crime -- that is, that they had destroyed the progressive and the thoughtful; that religionists had in all ages been cruel; that the chief priests of all people had incited the mob, to the end that heretics -- that is to say, philosophers -- that is to say, men who knew that the chief priests were hypocrites -- might be destroyed.

I also found that Christians had committed more of these crimes than all other religionists put together.

I also became acquainted with a large number of Jewish people, and I found them like other people, except that, as a rule, they were more industrious, more temperate, had fewer vagrants among them, no beggars, very few criminals; and in addition to all this, I found that they were intelligent, kind to their wives and children, and that, as a rule, they kept their contracts and paid their debts.

The prejudice was created almost entirely by religious, or rather irreligious, instruction. All children in Christian countries are taught that all the Jews are to be eternally damned who die in the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that it is not enough to believe in the inspiration of the Old Testament -- not enough to obey the Ten Commandments -- not enough to believe the miracles performed in the days of the prophets, but that every Jew must accept the New Testament and must be a believer in Christianity -- that is to say, he must be regenerated -- or he will simply be eternal kindling wood.

The church has taught, and still teaches, that every Jew is an outcast; that he is to-day busily fulfilling prophecy; that he is a wandering witness in favor of "the glad tidings of great joy;" that Jehovah is seeing to it that the Jews shall not exist as a nation -- that they shall have no abiding place, but that they shall remain scattered, to the end that the inspiration of the Bible may be substantiated.

Dr. John Hall of this city, a few years ago, when the Jewish people were being persecuted in Russia, took the ground that it was all fulfillment of prophecy, and that whenever a Jewish maiden was stabbed to death, God put a tongue in every wound for the purpose of declaring the truth of the Old Testament.

Just as long as Christians take these positions, of course they will do what they can to assist in the fulfillment of what they call prophecy, and they will do their utmost to keep the Jewish people in a state of exile, and then point to that fact as one of the corner-stones of Christianity.

My opinion is that in the early days of Christianity all sensible Jews were witnesses against the faith, and in this way excited the hostility of the orthodox. Every sensible Jew knew that no miracles had been performed in Jerusalem. They all knew that the sun had not been darkened, that the graves had not given up their dead, that the veil of the temple had not been rent in twain -- and they told what they knew. They were then denounced as the most infamous of human beings, and this hatred has pursued them from that day to this.

There is no other chapter in history so infamous, so bloody, so cruel, so relentless, as the chapter in which is told the manner in which Christians -- those who love their enemies -- have treated the Jewish people. This story is enough to bring the blush of shame to the cheek, and the words of indignation to the lips of every honest man.

Nothing can be more unjust than to generalize about nationalities, and to speak of a race as worthless or vicious, simply because you have met an individual who treated you unjustly. There are good people and bad people in all races, and the individual is not responsible for the crimes of the nation, or the nation responsible for the actions of the few. Good men and honest men are found in every faith, and they are not honest or dishonest because they are Jews or Gentiles, but for entirely different reasons.

Some of the best people I have ever known are Jews, and some of the worst people I have known are Christians. The Christians were not bad simply because they were Christians, neither were the Jews good because they were Jews. A man is far above these badges of faith and race. Good Jews are precisely the same as good Christians, and bad Christians are wonderfully like bad Jews.

Personally, I have either no prejudices about religion, or I have equal prejudice against all religions. The consequence is that I judge of people not by their creeds, not by their rites, not by their mummeries, but by their actions.

In the first place, at the bottom of this prejudice lies the coiled serpent of superstition. In other words, it is a religious question. It seems impossible for the people of one religion to like the people believing in another religion. They have different gods, different heavens, and a great variety of hells. For the followers of one god to treat the followers of another god decently is a kind of treason. In order to be really true to his god, each follower must not only hate all other gods, but the followers of all other gods.

The Jewish people should outgrow their own superstitions. It is time for them to throw away the idea of inspiration. The intelligent Jew of to-day knows that the Old Testament was written by barbarians, and he knows that the rites and ceremonies are simply absurd. He knows that no intelligent man should care anything about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

three dead barbarians. In other words, the Jewish people should leave their superstition and rely on science and philosophy.

The Christian should do the same. He, by this time, should know that his religion is a mistake, that his creed has no foundation in the eternal verities. The Christian certainly should give up the hopeless task of converting the Jewish people, and the Jews should give up the useless task of converting the Christians. There is no propriety in swapping superstitions -- neither party can afford to give any boot.

When the Christian throws away his cruel and heartless superstitions, and when the Jew throws away his, then they can meet as man to man.

In the meantime, the world will go on in its blundering way, and I shall know and feel that everybody does as he must, and that the Christian, to the extent that he is prejudiced, is prejudiced by reason of his ignorance, and that consequently the great lever with which to raise all mankind into the sunshine of philosophy, is intelligence.

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